

CAMBRIDGE
AND DISTRICT
CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY
LIMITED



JUBILEE SOUVENIR
1868-1919



Co-operation in Cambridge

Being the Jubilee Chronicle
— of —
The Cambridge and District
Co-operative Society Limited

1868-1919

: By W. HENRY BROWN :

MANCHESTER :
Co-operative Wholesale Society's Printing Works.
Longsight and Reddish.

1920.

INTRODUCTORY

ONE of the most virile sons of the University of Cambridge, Charles Kingsley, told us not to despise the day of small things if it leads to greater. And the present-day co-operators of the University town on the Cam are proud to recall, and record, the simple efforts of the men of 1868 and thereabouts who founded the society that has permeated town and country with confidence in the co-operative ideal.

The Cambridge and District Co-operative Society Limited originated in a narrow way; it might have developed in a social cul-de-sac—so limited was the outlook of some of the pioneers. But they were earnest folks; and spurred to effort by a minority of optimistic and tenacious leaders they rose high above the hurdles and obstacles that would have disheartened less purposeful people. For more than three decades the society went steadily forward in the groove made by the men who gave up leisure that it might prosper. Then it seemed to arise from lethargy; it heightened its vision and broadened its outlook.

To-day the co-operators of Cambridge are rightly gratified with their achievements; they are marching in unison to the Promised Land of the Co-operative Commonwealth; their tramp is heard on the border of the Fenlands, and their hearts are throbbing with the glow of the call of Culture and Co-operation. And as they look back into the wilderness from which they have as a society emerged, they

record, that all may renew their faith, the story of their movement from the dull days of its inception. The story that follows is based upon the minute-books that go back fifty years with a completeness that is probably unique in the annals of working-class organisations. To the secretaries who sat up chronicling the evening's doings while their companions slept, to the few remaining members of the first hundred co-operators of the Cam, and to the officials of the society in this Peace Year, the accuracy of the History is due. Happy is the society in thus being able to pass along to succeeding generations the story of its origin and growth, from being an idea to becoming the greatest distributive business in the county, a link between the borough and the villages round about, and an impressive social force in the town and county. It has not reached its zenith ; this is but the year of Jubilee, and every year that follows will add new lustre to the calendar of Cambridge and the power of industrial democracy.



CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	5
Pioneers and their Problems...	9
The Troubles of Management	18
The Minutiae of Business	26
Building for Themselves	35
The Flourishing Years	39
Educational Advance	43
The Years of War	47
The Missionary Spirit	51
Presidential Roll of Honour...	54



MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE.

Standing.—Messrs. D. CROWN, H. J. HOCKLEY, G. J. GOLDING, Mrs. D. GRAY, Messrs. W. HORWOOD, and T. BARNARD.
Sitting.—C. G. COLLINS, W. T. CHARTER (General Manager), G. R. MEADEN (President), E. DARLINGTON (Secretary), and J. A. MASON.



EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE.

Standing.—Mr. A. E. STUBBS, Mrs. K. OAKMAN, Mrs. E. BAGSTAFF, Mr. A. FORSDYKE.
Sitting.—Mr. G. F. HARRISON, Mr. F. CORNISH (Secretary), Mrs. E. E. FOISTER (President),
Miss E. PARNELL (Vice-President), and Mr. H. J. HARRADINE.

CHAPTER I.

PIONEERS AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Oh pure reformers, not in vain
Your generous trust in human kind.
The good that bloodshed could not gain
Your peaceful zeal shall find.

Whittier.

NOTHING could more closely approximate to the "self-determination" of the small community of consumers in Cambridge than the early proceedings of those who founded and sustained the co-operative movement. They left nothing to chance; they left little more to the committee. The members settled the policy, appointed the administrative officers, determined methods and means of remuneration, controlled the hours of shopping, and elected a committee to meet weekly in order to test the value of the resolutions arrived at by the members. The powers of the committee were as circumscribed as their resources. They made a few minor mistakes and one big discovery. They deliberated long and earnestly over the purchases of provisions, but their judgments in securing managers were so often awry that they could have prepared a volume on the futility of human experience in detecting business qualities in others. For some years their proceedings were such a series of ups and downs that a graphic diagram would have resembled the contour of an Alpine range. Managers rose and fell; but fortunately there was a solid stratum of good sense and optimism running through successive committees. Co-operation triumphed in the end; notably, as they say in the villages and towns alike, when it got its Charter. But that is anticipating.

Although there is a tradition of an earlier co-operative society having been in existence in the town, the real history of the Consumers' Union in Cambridge begins with the first meeting of the Cambridge Provident Industrial Society, in February, 1868. Legend tells of a previous

organisation formed by a few shopkeepers in order to do good things for the consumers ; but no reliable records are available, and the rumours that linger in the minds of the oldest members have not attained a really credible standing. But there were many shoemakers in the town in those years. They made hand-sewn boots for the undergraduates, and while they secured good understanding for other people occasionally thought of their own position. It was a lowly one ; they could make the upper and the sole of the boot meet fairly well ; but their wives had greater difficulty in making the income and expenditure overlap at the end of the week. And as they cobbled they considered. Then one of them went to London. He came back with a copy of " Pitman's Co-operator." It was read and re-read by a score of Cambridge workmen ; the spirit of association coursed through their cellars and their kitchens to such good purpose that some of them gathered in the house of one of their number, C. R. Nightingale by name, at No. 2, City Road, and gravely decided to secure for themselves and their families the advantages of co-operative trading. They were men of small wages. Of the provisional committee elected on February 1st, 1868, three were shoemakers, one did odd jobs about the colleges, and the others were carpenters, builders' labourers, and representatives of the various trades that find a place in the ordinary provincial town. In those days a pound a week was pretty good ; the joiner at 4½d. per hour was a veritable working aristocrat, and the agricultural labourers in the county regarded him as quite an affluent person, the more venturesome among them being lured by the lights of London and other towns to share in the wealth of the world.

While culture made Cambridge famous, low wages made the town notorious in the early decades of the Victorian Era. In 1837 the wages of the labourers in Cambridgeshire were 9s. 6d. per week ; they fell to 7s. 6d. in 1851, rising three shillings in the next decade, mounting to 11s. in 1867-70, and remaining somewhere in that region as the Cambridge Co-operative Society was being founded. In the late 'sixties of the 19th century the wages of the highly-



STABLES AND GARAGE, showing a few of the motor lorries.

skilled workers of Cambridge were about £50 a year ; those of the less skilled £33 ros., and the unskilled found themselves on a very lowly plane at £24 ros. Figures like these have no relation to present-day notions of values. They merely bridge the period between the Hungry Forties and the foundation of co-operation in Cambridge ; but they



8. CITY ROAD
(where the Society started its operations).

suggest a meagreness of living, a constant struggle for the family life, and an almost despairing outlook that clouded East Anglia and the Fen country as the Victorian Era developed its satisfied complacency. It is, however, well to note that if wages were low the prices of some commodities were not so high as now. Eggs were sold at sixteen

a shilling in the summer, and a penny each in the winter, while the cost of butter was between 10d. and 1s. per lb. Meat was a rarity and, so that they should have a fair supply, the new co-operators retailed sugar at practically cost price—a recognition of the fact that their great purpose was the supply of the nourishments and necessary articles of daily diet.

Following the Civil War in America there was great trade depression here; the crops failed, and destitution shadowed the land. The harvest was bad in 1867 in the eastern counties where sickness prevailed to an alarming extent. Truly the despondency of the times augured badly for the success of any scheme of amelioration. But just as “the darkest hour is that before the dawn,” so out of the apparently hopeless horizon came a streak of roseate hue for the people of the Fenlands and neighbouring counties.

Fortunately for the co-operative pioneers of Cambridge, their sincerity and character were acknowledged by the people who knew them, and when on February 10th, 1868, they went to the Post Office with £1 to open a Savings Bank account no one was suspicious; the tradespeople were sceptical and scornful. The co-operators got quickly to work. On March 16th they adopted their rules; a week later they were emboldened to print 500 copies, and on May 8th these were duly registered. A copy of the original set is before me—the property of Mr. J. H. Cooke, whose name deserves a high place in the Society’s roll of honour. The registered office was at 8, City Road, Cambridge, and

“The object of this Society is to raise a fund, by voluntary subscriptions of the members, for the better enabling them to purchase food, firing, clothing, and other necessities, by carrying on, in common, the trade or business of general dealers, both wholesale and retail.”

The application of profits foreshadowed the support of educational work, assistance to charitable institutions, and the payment of dividends on purchases. With the optimism of world-reformers the founders of the society anticipated the possibility of surplus capital, and Rule 10 provided that “should the committee of management have more money in hand than they can profitably invest, they

shall have power to reduce the number of shares held by the members ; and the member holding the highest number of shares shall have his shares reduced first." Such a condition of affairs has never occurred, and the committee has always been able to find a co-operative service for the savings of the members. Another carefully devised rule laid down the regulation that "all the society's goods, purchased for the members, shall be supplied to them and others out of the shops or stores established by the committee of management in various localities in the district, not exceeding fifteen miles from the society's principal place of business." The committee were required to commence their meetings at 6 p.m., and to convene monthly meetings of the members "for discussing the affairs and suggesting improvements or alterations ; for the guidance of the committee and the approval of candidates desirous of becoming members of the society." The rules having been registered, weekly meetings for the encouragement of the faithful few, and the collection of capital, continued, Mr. W. W. Gatward being the secretary.

On June 22nd a most important meeting took place. It was held at a member's house at the unusual hour of 9 p.m. Officers were elected as follows : Trustees, T. H. Prime, R. A. Smith, and A. Turner ; treasurer, W. P. Hinson ; secretary, Peter Churchman ; committee, R. A. Smith, W. W. Gatward, T. H. Prime, A. Cox, and J. Bracher ; auditors, P. Rump and T. H. Prime. For another six months they steadfastly advanced in shareholding confidence, and at the end of the year the following possessors of one pound each in their share capital were set forth in the books of the society :—

Churchman, Peter	Cook, J. H.	Smith, P. A.
Overton, H. G.	Miller, R.	Turner, A.
Smith, R. A.	Hiner, W. A.	Balls, C.
Brown, W.	Davis, James	Miller, G. E.
Nightingale, C.	Berwick, F.	Miller, R. J.
Horspool, W.	Robinson, W.	Cowley, C.
Cracknell, W.	Tolliday, J.	Rump, P.
Bracher, J.	Spinks, H.	Smith, M. L.

Wells, Samuel	Smith, E.	Anderson, S.
Hinson, W. P.	Wisbey.	Dean, J.
Drake, W.	Prime, T. H.	Cox, A.

By February, 1869, the membership had reached 50, and the capital £44. The enthusiasts could wait no longer, and having got a few goods from a wholesale grocer the new co-operators assembled in one of their houses to divide them on the basis of their needs restrained by their resources, the committee attending according to a rota. Within a few days the possibilities of expansion became apparent, and a special meeting of members held in the shortest month of the year elected a woman who was known to them all as the storekeeper. A room at 8, City Road, was hired, and there they really began to play at the business of shopkeeping. Noise of the working men shopkeepers caused a little stir in the town; many were tremulous and would not help; others were less thrifty than the pioneers and could not assist. But the fifty original members were loyalists; they took their trade where they had put their money, and at the quarterly meeting in April the committee were empowered to pay the storekeeper 10s. a week. It was a mighty step forward; the committee could not venture so far in one stride. So they delayed a while until the accounts for the first three months were completed. Then they declared a dividend of 1s. 2d. in the £ on the purchases of members, and of 7d. on those of non-members. Having thus demonstrated the value of co-operation to the consumer they reconsidered the position of the employee, and in July agreed to carry out the wishes of the members with regard to paying wages to the storekeeper. But, so that the luxury should not come as too sudden a shock, delayed its realisation till the first week in August. A fortnight later they decided to open the shop at 7-30 a.m. instead of 8 a.m.—an innovation mutely regarded by the storekeeper as a three hours' addition to her working week.

The great venture having thus been launched things went smoothly in those early days. J. Bracher, who signed the early minutes as chairman, resigned, and was

succeeded by T. H. Prime, who, in his time, served many offices in the society. As the autumnal tints came upon the Fens of Cambridgeshire, so the radiant hues of success settled upon the co-operators of the town. Several successive meetings of the committee had no business to negotiate. "The oracles are dumb," and the minute-book gives only the names of those who regularly attended to transact the affairs of the community. Members were greatly interested in the monthly meetings, and by September the attendance had outgrown the humble kitchen in which the original deliberations had taken place, and it was decided to engage a private room—away from the shop. Christmas fare began to cast its quotations before, and the first entry of goods received in any quantity occurred in October, when the following record was made:—

1-cwt. currants	...	..	..	32s. od.
$\frac{1}{2}$ box Valencias	..	..	..	47s. od.
1-cwt. sugar	..	..	..	35s. 6d.

Prices for currants in November, 1919, were £5. 7s. 6d. ; for Valencias, £6. 15s. 6d. ; and for sugar, £3. 16s. 8d. per cwt. in each case.

Mr. T. P. Verrinder, a solicitor's clerk, who subsequently rendered splendid help to the society as secretary and as adviser, was elected to the committee, and the rest of the year was devoted to the minutiae of business. The dividend for the last quarter of 1869 was only 1s. ; but more ominous of the break in the co-operative horizon was the beginning of trouble between the committee and the lady storekeeper. We are too near the contemporaries of these good people to enter into a literary or judicial discussion as to the merits of the disputes that occurred. They were apparently errors of omission on the part of the lady and partly resulted from the committee's inexperience as a collective body in dealing with the other sex. Individually, in his own particular household, each committeeman could doubtless have guided himself with care and discretion ; but jointly, well—the lady had her own way, and the committee theirs. At one meeting it was agreed that she

should be informed that when she cleared up the shop she should lock and bolt the front door, and put the bars to the shutters. That was conveyed orally; but the shutters were unbarred, and the bolt protected not the front door. Admonition, explanation, discussion, proving unavailing written directions were forwarded to the lady, who seems to have had the sympathy of her friends and neighbours. These culminated in an ultimatum to the following effect :—

“ It was unanimously resolved that Mrs. P—— be informed that the committee think that she is not aware what the usual practice is in a grocery store, and they think it their duty hereby to inform her that for the future they will expect that the shop floor be swept every morning, the counter, canisters, scales, shelves, bottles, etc., be dusted and kept as far as possible in a clean and business-like manner; also that the windows be dusted every morning and cleaned once a week. If Mrs. P—— requires any dusters or other articles to enable her to carry the foregoing request into effect, she can have same upon applying to the manager. The committee will hold another special meeting at the termination of a month from this date to take into consideration and report to the next quarterly meeting the subject of increase of salary to the storekeeper, but such a report in her favour will be conditional upon the manner in which the foregoing suggestions of the committee are carried into effect.”

In the midst of this eventful episode in democratic business, I break off the chapter. Its ending and the tension it caused among the Cambridge co-operators struggling to become their own shopkeepers will be told in the next.



CHAPTER II.

THE TROUBLES OF MANAGEMENT

Tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.
With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone ;
We bear the burden of the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return,
All we have built do we discern.

Matthew Arnold.

AFFAIRS were becoming so opulent that honoraria of fifty shillings each were given to the treasurer and the secretary, and all would have been well—but for the lady. There was trouble in the store. The committee and the storekeeper could not agree. There was more than the locking and barring of doors ; the condition in which the shop was kept was a matter of criticism, and caused the committee troublous nights and questioning days. Eventually the problem was referred to the quarterly meeting. The members took sides, and the champions of the lady secured the adoption of a resolution that with regard “to the practicability of appointing a new storekeeper this meeting is of the opinion that it is at present both unnecessary and undesirable, and that this meeting place confidence in the ability of Mrs. P—to perform the duties of storekeeper.” That settled the point—for that evening. But a fortnight later the committee went again into the question and, finally, resolved to examine the store and put it into an orderly and businesslike condition. More than that, they decided to put into operation their own views, a matter of decisive determination that reveals a growing strength in matters of management. This was emphasized by a decision to send an advertisement to a local paper for a storekeeper. On March 14th a special meeting was held to elect this important official—the lady having apparently (although the minutes are not so lucid



WOMEN'S GUILD COMMITTEE.

Back Row—Mrs. DYSON, Mrs. ROSE, Mrs. MOULE, Mrs. BAKER, Mrs. CROWN.
Front Row.—Mrs. FOISTER (Vice-President), Mrs. BAGSTAFF (Secretary), Mrs. RACKHAM (President),
Mrs. CHAPMAN (Treasurer), and Mrs. SCARBORO.



A CAMBRIDGE CO-OPERATIVE MOTOR VAN OUTSIDE KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

as usual on that point; left the society's employment. But at the members' meeting only one candidate attended with testimonials, and the assembly was adjourned till the next evening with the idea of adding two names to the list. A score of members were present to inspect two candidates, one of whom was selected by ten votes to nine. Within seven days, however, it was agreed to hold another special meeting for a similar purpose: this took place on April 4th, when the previous resolution was rescinded, and the unsuccessful competitor on the first occasion was chosen by 31 votes to the 2 recorded for the selected candidate at the earlier election. Such an emphatic result enabled the members to meet in generous mood the following week, when votes of £4 to the secretary, £1 to the treasurer, and £5 to the manager were made with a refreshing unanimity. The manager was a special officer who had become necessary, to act as an intermediary between the committee and the storekeeper; and the £5 was assuredly well earned. A sum of £1 was also awarded to Mr. C. Nightingale for allowing the meetings from the beginning of things to February, 1869, to be held in his house.

For a few weeks matters proceeded smoothly, but in the summer the storekeeper resigned; and it was decided to give permanence to the post by offering a wage of £1 weekly. In October the members had two candidates named Smith for selection. One was elected; the other was rejected. And then at the following meeting of the committee the latter was appointed manager, apparently as a kind of consolation. Fortunately this was endorsed at the following members' meeting. But that did not end the worries of the committee, for they were admonishing the new storekeeper for giving credit before Christmas. Early in the New Year the committee spent three hours in cleaning the ceiling of the shop, the secretary carrying in a dozen pails of water to facilitate the proceedings. But business increased, and an assistant, at a wage of 6s. weekly, had to be appointed. Then troubles grew; the offices of treasurer and manager were combined; but the storekeeper and his assistant fell out. The latter charged the former

with not being up at 7 a.m. when he arrived to commence his duties; the committee adjured him to rise earlier and, at the next monthly meeting of members, he suggested a weekly half holiday. This was adopted. Friction continued in the shop, charge and counter-charge following in quick succession, the matter culminating at a special general meeting early in 1872 when the storekeeper was accused of "wrecklessly" charging 6½d. too much on one article, and giving 2d. too little change on another transaction. He resigned soon after, and a local man was appointed as successor, the stipend being raised to 24s. a week. He was permitted to reside on the premises at a nominal rent of £7. 10s. per annum, including gas and water. In consideration of his allowing the committee to meet in one of the rooms which was to be adequately warmed, he was promised a rebate of 10s. per annum. The new storekeeper swept clean, and a predecessor was called to the members' meeting to account for the stock being only worth £140 instead of £169, as set forth in the accounts.

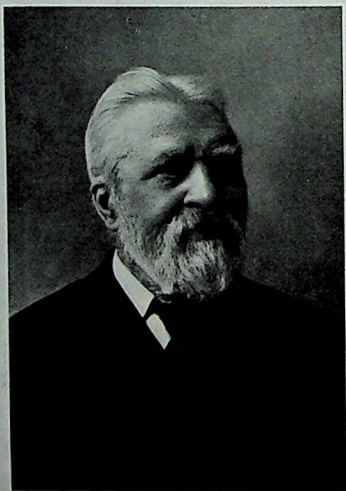
Of course it was not his fault. He said so. Under the new storekeeper troubles became less clamorous and less frequent, the division of the offices of treasurer and manager, and the appointment of Messrs. Christmas and Aitchison, respectively, to those positions having a good effect. The storekeeper, too, was a man of some firmness in his relations with the committee. He asked for the store to be closed all day on Whit-Monday; the committee sought a compromise by agreeing to the shop being closed at 2 p.m. This the storekeeper would not allow. He declined to take down the shutters; but offered to serve any callers at the side door. Never having worked on the Whit-Monday he was averse to beginning so late in life, and in co-operative service. Preparing for emergencies he obtained a dog. This led to an altercation and correspondence with the postmaster of Cambridge, who detained letters for the society until called for—as the postman would not go near the aforesaid animal, which had savagely attacked him. The committee quietly asked the manager to take precautions to prevent such ferocious outbursts in

future. In 1873 the storekeeper's wages of 24s. a week were reduced to 20s., a commission of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on all the takings being given by way of compensation and encouragement. Then came a new storekeeper on similar terms.

He began well, getting a day off for his wedding; a member of the committee looking after the shop during his absence. Among the landmarks of progress must be placed the cheque for 15s. which was sent in June, 1873, for membership of the Co-operative Wholesale Society; two years later a subscription was forwarded to the Central Board of the Co-operative Union. On January 1st it was decided to pay all tradesmen by cheque, an account being opened with the C.W.S. Bank. Thus the links were made in the chain of co-operative loyalty and comradeship which has always been a strong feature of the Cambridge Co-operative Society. The next few years went slowly along and the spirit of appreciation gradually rose until a gratuity of 5s. was given the storekeeper's wife for her cleanliness and consideration to the committee—evidently she had kept the room warm on cold evenings. But good storekeepers could not be kept indefinitely. He left and, within a year, there was grievous difficulty with his successor. The latter was appointed with a shilling a week more than any of the others; but he proved to be pounds worse than the whole of them. There was an alleged deficiency of stock; he was expelled and, seeing a solicitor, threatened legal proceedings. The committee were alarmed but, fortified by a resolution of the members in favour of the dismissal, they went in a body to another lawyer—and found comfort. Following such a stormy succession of storekeepers a system of paying according to the sales, and proportionately to the wastage, was adopted. That only lasted a few months, and then Mr. B. Mills was discovered. From that time onwards, as secretary, and later as secretary-manager he led the way to the smoother waters. To him the society owes much and, in the eventide of his career, it is his delight to see the sound progress that has been, and is still being, made towards the realisation of the hopes—and more—of those faithful few who persevered in

the days when storekeepers were a trial and a perpetual worry. Mr. Mills brought solace to the harassed committee room.

But it must not be supposed that the lives of the early committeemen had no bright moments ; true their official careers were full of worries in the shop and of arguments



MR. BEN MILLS.

with members at the meetings. But there were pleasing and compensating incidents that gave a spice of delight to those jaded toilers. In the first Christmas of the society a turkey arrived, by carrier, from a miller at Sawston. It was a welcome bird ; and the committee decided upon its disappearance in true co-operative fashion. They hit upon

the expedient of having a supper at the house of one of their number. In the early years the annual minute ran "the annual gift has been received from Mr. —, of Sawston. Ordered that the committee meet at Mr. — residence (he having kindly offered the same) for the purpose of partaking thereof (including auditors) on Friday night at 8-30 p.m." The auditors were present as guests of the committee, and not as fellow-victims with the turkey. In 1877 the resolution was varied to the extent of the committeeman at whose house the bird was consumed being asked to provide a "good substantial supper," by which we are inclined to the idea that the turkeys had depreciated in quality and quantity during the decade. But as the years went on these convivial gatherings ceased ; nowadays such friendly gifts no longer come the way of co-operators.



CHAPTER III.

THE MINUTIÆ OF BUSINESS.

" Small service is true service while it lasts."

Wordsworth.

MANY of the minor matters that came the way of committees in the early years seem infinitesimally small in these spacious days; but they were real events, almost epoch-making, in the Seventies of the last century. Just imagine how the elected of their contemporaries gravely arranged themselves around the kitchen table in those early evenings. They little dreamed of the world of commerce into which they were entering, and how their sacrifice of leisure would disturb the domestic quiet. They sampled the goods, fixed prices, weighed quantities, made parcels and disposed of the same to their fellow-members with the zeal of Social Crusaders. Often they were in front of the members. During the first year the sales totalled £1,082; the membership had risen to 90, and the share capital to as many pounds. 1870 began so auspiciously that the members, in business meeting assembled, carried a resolution "that we celebrate the anniversary with a tea party, the committee to carry out the same, with power to add to their number." The festive evening was held, and attracted so much local interest that the local newspapers gave the co-operative shopkeepers a paragraph all to themselves. The committee were encouraged to advise the members to purchase new premises in Fitzroy Street—so they could advance from the City Road. There were 36 members present; 23 voted against the committee's recommendation. Three months later the committee were given permission to rent the shop at £22 per annum. That was a great move forward.

At that time the store was opened for business at 7-30 a.m. every day; on Saturdays it was closed at 11 p.m.; on Fridays at 8 p.m., and at 7-30 p.m. all the other days of the week. In the summer of that year the first move was

made towards the weekly half-day holiday, when the shop was closed at 5 p.m. on Thursday—to the surprise of the local tradesmen, for Cambridge was not only a place of short wages, but one of long hours.

They were zealous in small things as well as in great. On May 16th, 1871, they ordered some cigars to sell at 2d. each. These were delivered on the 19th, paid for on the 20th, and sold during the next few days—for the whole consignment weighed 1 lb. only. By June 5th a repeat order was in progress. So rapidly was the business developing that it became necessary to purchase a new minute book. The subject was gravely considered, and it was decided that the new book should be a foolscap size. The blank pages of the old one were to be used for transcribing letters—a piece of economy that has enabled us to have access to many items of interest that might otherwise have been lost. Here is a typical letter sent to a firm that had not dispatched its quotations as carefully as should have been done :—

CAMBRIDGE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED.

12th February, 1872.

GENTLEMEN :

I herewith enclose you order for a supply of Tea, Sugar, Currants, etc., and the Committee will be obliged by you sending same to their Store forthwith.

As regards the sample of Soaps sent us (which, by the by, cost 1s. 6d. for carriage), no prices were sent or marked on them, but having a practical man on the Committee who understands the quality of Soap, the Committee were enabled to forward you order for a part of the sample. Was the bar of Brown Soap "First" or "Seconds" Brown? There being only *one* piece of Brown Soap, the Committee did not come to any conclusion as to sending order, which must stand over for the present.

With respect to the Teas you sent: The prices per lb. were marked outside the samples in some instances, with the words "and duty," the meaning of which is not quite understood by the Committee. For instance, one sample was marked 2s. "and duty," which the Committee concluded meant 2s. 6d. per lb. Other samples had the price only marked thereon, and no mention made about "duty." What the Committee desire to be informed is this: Where the samples are marked, say, "1s. 6d. and duty," does that mean 2s. per lb.? Where they are marked with the price, say 2s.,

and no reference made to "duty," does that price of 2s. per lb. include the duty, or otherwise?

Perhaps in future when transmitting samples to our Society you will kindly state the prices of the several articles sent, the observance of which in the present instance would have occasioned much less loss of time to the Committee and less trouble to the Secretary.

Yours faithfully,

T. P. VERRINDER,

Secretary.

T. P. Verrinder left his impress upon the orderly doings of the Society. P. Churchman resigned in 1871 because "of the growing business of the Society, and not because of any disagreement"; thereupon T. P. Verrinder was elected his successor, resigning in 1874, and W. Christmas became treasurer. In addition to supplying groceries it was decided to contract with local bakers to supply the members with bread. And then it was resolved to paper the room in which the committee met, the president and storekeeper being empowered to purchase the paper at 8d. or 10d. per piece, and engage a paperhanger to hang the same at 6d. per piece, he to find his own paste.

The Society was, in those distant days, practically confined to the town of Cambridge. Notices of meetings, etc., were delivered by hand by the committee, who evidently thought no service too small or too menial if it was calculated to be of value to the Society. They helped to carry stocks from the railway station, and they chopped and sawed the wood packing boxes into firewood, which was roughly bundled for sale in the stores—all with the idea of adding to the general resources. Even when the bakehouse was opened in 1872 the first sack of flour was baked by the treasurer—to the entire satisfaction of his colleagues. In those years the committee ordered everything required in the stores. They were indeed very practical fellows. When they embarked upon expenditure of great amount they sought that it should fulfil a double purpose. Trade had grown so greatly and customers had become so numerous by 1874 that it was decided to purchase half-a-dozen chairs for the use of members by day, and for the service of the committee in the evenings. In

those days men sacrificed much for others and themselves ; and the committee were full of the spirit that gave co-operation its triumphs when enemies were many and friends were few. In 1872, when W. Drake was chairman, there were 147 members, only nine of whom lived in the country. Sales had risen to £2,289 for the year, practically all to residents of Cambridge. Hence the committee were closely in touch with their constituents. They knew the extent of their individual loyalty, for they examined the paper parcels which the members made of their checks every quarter and entered the totals in the books. Each committeeman was provided with coloured pencils ; one quarter blue paper checks were used ; red ones would be used in the following term—and at the end of the period, after the meeting, the checks were burned. On one occasion, in 1875, serious trouble arose because a committeeman inadvertently burned the list of members assigned to him ; it was reported to the quarterly meeting, which decided that, in future, coloured ink should be substituted for the coloured pencils—but made no recommendation with regard to the danger of future fires. Nor was it till 1900 that the present Climax check system was introduced.

Storekeepers brought troubles to the committee ; occasionally the latter had to assume a judicial attitude. A member complained that two stone of flour, out of 10 stone delivered, had been spoilt by the rain, whereupon it was entered in the minutes that “ the committee doubt the accuracy of the statement, but are willing to allow 2s. to be deducted from the next order.” Later when a member said her bread was wrong the committee investigated the matter, and deducted the amount from the baker's wages.

TRANSPORT TROUBLES.

Following the purchase of a pony was a succession of new problems. The committee decided that as the pony and cart would cost £25 they might as well dispose of the handcart that had previously served their purpose. They agreed to offer it for 50s., but were willing to take 40s. It

ultimately realised 30s. When they purchased the pony they had to buy a new bit for him at a cost of 5s.—so that they had disappointment on each transaction. The pony had an unfortunate habit of running away from the doors of co-operators. He had been in private trade, and could not quickly adapt his ideas to those of the new owners. The committee were in a quandry; they instructed the baker to attend their meeting and explain the lively conduct of the animal. He gave examples of his unruly conduct and—I quote from the official record—“a discussion ensued on the best means to prevent such doings, and it was ultimately proposed, seconded and carried that a leather rein be purchased to fasten on the bridle and lay on the ground.” A month later the pony was, by special resolution, allowed to stroll on Midsummer Common on Sunday mornings, from which it may be inferred that he had mended his way and restrained his pace.

Not often did the committee come into conflict with their neighbours. Forty-five years since the trustees of the adjoining Eden Chapel made an aperture in their building for a window; the co-operators instructed them to brick it up, a demand afterwards agreeably withdrawn at the request of the worshippers, who promised to remove the window, at seven days' notice, if such was desired at any future time. From time to time the committee questioned the loyalty of the members, canvassing the erring ones, and infusing hopes of great things in the faithful few. In 1875 a number of the latter voluntarily gave up their checks at the end of the quarter. At the time there were 108 trading members; credit had crept in, and the committee became collectors, calling upon the members in arrears and getting in £80, leaving only £56 owing. Sometimes they called for lists of non-trading members and gave them a friendly call; visiting sub-committees were formed; a section was deputed to examine the claims of districts that wanted to know more of co-operation. By 1878 the Society had 207 members, whose average share capital was £3. 7s. 8d. But the purchases were not to the satisfaction of the committee, who thus admonished their constituents:



HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS.

Standing.—T. BLAZLEY (Stable Foreman), W. R. P. STILES (Furnishing Manager), E. DARLINGTON (Secretary),
A. PARKER (Manager, Coal Dept.), W. WELCH (Manager, Butchery Dept.).
Sitting.—J. QUINCEY (Grocery Manager), B. MILLS (Chairman, Employees' Committee), W. C. YELLAND (Outfitting
and Tailoring Manager), W. T. CHARTER (General Manager), H. A. BURTON (Drapery Manager),
R. E. WISHER (Boot Dept. Manager), W. V. HALL (Bakery Manager).



THE GREEN, HISTON (*facing the branch*).

"There is considerable room for improvement, especially in the matter of purchases; 5s. 8d. per week scarcely represents the amount usually spent in food in working men's families." As new departments were opened the advantage of certain committeemen watching their progress was seen on several occasions. On the first quarter they entered into the coal trade members were saved 2s. per ton; a year later it gave an advantage to the Society of 2s. 4d. —coming very opportunely when £3 had to be taken from the reserve fund to pay 1s. dividend. In 1880 it was decided to add hosiery and drapery to the other departments; but the added businesses proved very trying to the committee; in 1883 a deputation visited the Sawston Society for information and guidance. That, however, did not quieten the feeling of unrest, and in 1885 four women members were appointed to examine certain stocks and prices with a view to advising the men as to how it was meeting requirements.

From 1868 to 1881 the committees had worked without fee or recompense. They had set an example of selflessness that was entirely creditable; and if they blundered over storekeepers and stocks we must remember their lack of business experience. Their daily round was circumscribed: their evening business was in another world. In 1881 the members decided that they should be paid 6d. for each committee meeting they attended, and a month later it was decided that the meetings should begin at 8 p.m., and those not present within a few minutes should forfeit their remuneration for that night. That and the following year proved unusually trying, owing to managerial vagaries, and ultimately it was decided, when the trade was about £160 a week, to appoint a managing secretary. Applications were invited, and in 1882 Mr. B. Mills was selected. Things went very well for a time, but in 1885 rumblings among the members led to the committee resigning in a body. At a special meeting all charges were withdrawn, and the committee continued in office. Business was growing, and it was necessary to divide the executive position, Mr. Dickson, of Darlington, being appointed

manager, and Mr. Mills continuing as secretary. During the next few years progress was steady, the committee entering into farming operations with the Bursars of St. John's College as landlords. But after a few seasons this was given up.

By that time the Society had got beyond its thousandth member, and was well established in the town. The membership in 1888 was 1,215; the sales £23,604; share capital had risen to £9,146; the average dividend per quarter was 1s. 10½d., and allocations to educational work and charitable institutions proved the increasing spirit of the Society in the affairs of the district. A Penny Bank was established, a committeeman in attendance, according to a rota system, to keep an eye on the boot department at the same time.



CHAPTER IV.

BUILDING FOR THEMSELVES

We have not wings, we cannot soar,
But we have feet to scale and climb
By slow degrees, by more and more,
The cloudy summit of our time.

Longfellow.

THE experiences of the Society with regard to building its premises are sufficiently interesting to have a section all their own. Many of the pioneers were builders—small master workers, journeymen operatives, and little tradesmen. They were experts and critics as well as co-operators and social reformers. The building trade has always been an important one in the town, and when in 1871 the Society decided to go from City Road into Fitzroy Street it was necessary to effect some alterations. Tenders were invited from nine builders who were members. That accepted was for £52. 18s. 6d., and £3 was advanced to the contractor in the first week to help him to pay labour. In 1876 the premises were purchased, and the title deeds came into the hands of the Society four years later. Trade continued to grow, and extensions were again becoming necessary.

At the first members' meeting in 1881, "John Barleycorn" came upon the scene, this being a well-known public-house in the vicinity of the stores. The place was for sale, and some of the members were keenly concerned as to its purchase; but they were in a minority, and it was resolved to pull down the old premises of the Society, and the committee were instructed to raise a fund of £500 for rebuilding. But at the March meeting this decision was reversed, and it was resolved to buy the premises. This was done, the price paid being £360. By the beginning of the following year the committee were going into the details of the matter. They considered "John Barleycorn" from three points of view, viz., building upon the site, building a

bakery only as a commencement, and selling the place by auction. Should either of the first two suggestions carry it would become necessary to appoint a special building committee. Ultimately the bakery proposition was passed, and a building committee of eleven members was appointed, with one of their number as working foreman to carry out the work required. The principal entrance was to be in Fitzroy Street. On January 24th, 1882, a special meeting was held in the "John Barleycorn," at which plans were submitted and the members decided that the Society should be its own contractor. Moreover the license was allowed to drop. The working foreman was to be architect and manager with power to take on, and if he thought well, discharge the workers. By way of economy he was to utilise the old materials as far as possible, and the interest of members was aroused by the offer to them of the useless timber as firewood—on exceptionally good terms.

Building was begun, and troubles commenced at the same time, for the architect-foreman could not agree with everybody, and scarcely anybody agreed with him. Leisurely progress was made during the summer, and when the committee sought explanations of the dilatory erection of the building they were greeted with violent abuse. At length the strong man appeared. Mr. J. H. Cooke, who had rendered service in various capacities over a long term of years, was elected as president. Promptly the foreman's power of discharging men was stopped and, within a month, the resignation of that official was reported. Then the store buildings in Fitzroy Street were completed, the cost being about £1,300. Two years later property was purchased in James Street whereon, in 1888, a fine bakery was erected to the credit of co-operative enterprise. Before then, however, land had been purchased (in August, 1885) for a branch shop in Mill Road and, immediately this shop was completed, arrangements were made to erect a new store on the Victoria Road—and the work was let to a contractor, the members apparently not being desirous of repeating their earlier experience of direct labour. In 1889 the

Society celebrated its 21st anniversary, and made the town familiar with the fame of its new bakery—a bakery that is a monument of working class regard for the purity of their chief food supply.



MILL ROAD BRANCH (No. 1),
Romsey Town.



THE STABLES, showing a few of the Society's horse vans.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLOURISHING YEARS

'Tis not in mortals to command success,
But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it.

Addison's Cato.

THE decade 1888-1898 was one of doubled membership, doubled sales, doubled share capital, doubled profits, and general advance. Mr. G. R. Meaden's association with the Education Committee in the early part of 1889 led the way to his election as president the same year. An experiment in sharing profits with the employees was tried, and abandoned in a couple of years; and various suggestions for branch developments, particularly at Old Chesterton and New Town, were made. Mr. Meaden was the strong man of the time, and when, in 1894, the Society's Education Committee sought to carry its views to the Board of Guardians he became the candidate—and a successful one too. Under his chairmanship the turbulent ways of earlier years were straightened out, and the meetings were often "bright, brief, and brotherly"—a trilogy of virtues that enabled progress to be continuous. Only one ripple occurred in the stream. In order to keep in touch with things in the bakery trade the committee joined the Master Bakers' Association. Some of the watchful members fearing that "evil communications corrupt good manners," and that the delegates might be lessened in the strength of their co-operative ardour protested. They did so in an orderly constitutional manner, carrying, at the quarterly meeting, a resolution to the effect that "This meeting while highly approving of the general management of the committee greatly deplores the alliance with the Master Bakers of Cambridge, and earnestly requests them to break off the alliance at once and, in the future, join no league of tradesmen for the conduct of our business"—an injunction which is regarded as perpetual.

Towards the end of 1898 it was proposed to establish central premises in Burleigh Street, and the notion aroused considerable interest. But not till some time after was it fully realised. Meanwhile, in May, 1899, Mr. W. T. Charter, whose idealism and practical efforts have tinged the later years with many a roseate streak and done much to secure the future, was elected to the Board of Management. The following figures may appropriately be set forth in this place as showing the progress of twenty years :—

Year.	Number of Members.	Sales	Share Capital and Penny Bank.	Interest on Share Capital and Penny Bank.	Dividend Returned to Members.
1899	2,413	£ 51,513	£ 18,783	£ 687	£ 4,136
1919	9,100	290,656	106,018	4,303	20,289

In 1899 Mr. D. Crown became president, and served in that capacity for ten strenuous years, during which much good work was done—especially when it is recalled that the rule limiting the operations of the Society to within fifteen miles of the town was still on the books. It restricted movement, and later it delayed the Society in giving a helping hand to neighbouring societies in enfeebled health. Moreover 1904-5 were years of severe trade depression in Cambridge—the building trade being in a particularly bad way. But the co-operators persevered, establishing an Emergency Fund to help the members in difficult circumstances, made investments in the Assington Co-operative Farming Association, and showed practical sympathy with the Bethesda quarrymen in their struggle with Lord Penrhyn. Not only did the Society strive to keep down the prices of the goods sold to the members, but it maintained a high standard of quality. In 1905—the same year it purchased land at Cottenham for a branch—the footwear department was separated from the general drapery, and the committee reported with regard to the

boots and shoes " they are made of solid leather, and if they are once worn we know your future trade with us is assured."

The year 1908 was a great one in the Society's history. The fine new buildings in Burleigh Street were opened, and an exhibition of co-operative productions in the Corn Exchange gave opportunity to present a comprehensive view of the movement to the townspeople. Facilities were made for the grocery, provisions, confectionery, drapery, boot and shoe, outfitting, and kindred departments, the range of shops constituting a business centre that has given distinction to co-operation in Cambridge. The furnishing and hardware branches were installed in the old grocery premises in Fitzroy Street. Cottage property adjoining the Society's premises in James Street was purchased. New ovens were fitted in the bakery, making the establishment the most complete and modern in the county. Grants were made to co-operative propaganda in the district, evidence of the widening view of the Society and, for the first time, the balance sheet gave the name of its accountant, Mr. W. T. Charter, and in September, 1910, he became secretary and accountant, a combination that was strengthened the following year when he was appointed managing secretary—the appointment by the committee being reported to the monthly meeting, where it was enthusiastically and unanimously approved. It is an interesting comparison to find that as between 1910 and 1919 the stocks in trade more than doubled; the wages bill more than quadrupled; while by wise depreciation and financial oversight the value of the land and buildings, fixtures, live and rolling stock, &c., remained at practically the same figure in the accounts.

Incidentally the tenour of the committee's reports changed about that time, and admonitions to co-operative steadfastness, and wise saws with regard to the true interest of the movement took the place of the official records that had previously stated the quarterly case. Members were told that " societies such as this form one of the strongest supports against being governed by monopoly," and later were assured that " briefly, the co-operative societies stand

as an example of the collective ownership of property by the working classes, which shall be used for its own mutual advantage. Much depends upon the people connected with the organisation in determining its success. If we get a larger proportion of trading members who are co-operators in principle as well as trading with us for their own immediate benefit, there will be a larger scope than has appeared possible in the past." And while such philosophy was being voiced by the committee they were securing the "larger scope" by initiating new branches in Old Chesterton, in Newnham, and in Hill's Road. Consideration was being given to Royston in the adjoining county and, just before the end of the war, the co-operative society at Bishop's Stortford was taken over as a branch. It had had a career of ups and downs, but since then it has been on the ascending scale. Many developments took place in the internal arrangements of the Society; half-yearly balance sheets were introduced; wages and labour conditions were reviewed and revised; new tailoring and boot repairing workshops were opened, and, when the war came, a state of peaceful progression became a state of preparedness which enabled the Society to face the trying years of international conflict with confidence.



CHAPTER VI.

EDUCATIONAL ADVANCE

"To prepare us for complete living is the function which Education has to discharge."—*Herbert Spencer.*

IN these days of elementary, secondary, and university education, we think little of the dark times for English working men before the Education Act of 1872. Maurice and the Working Men's College had sent a gleam of knowledge through the blank despair that filled the makers of wealth in the early Victorian period; and the co-operative societies which were formed between 1844 and 1870 were the originators of much real educational work in night classes and continuation schools before the State recognised its collective duty to the citizens. Owen's social missionaries were the peripatetic educators of the first half of the Nineteenth Century, and in the years when the Cambridge co-operators were struggling towards success Henry Pitman was writing and speaking to groups of working men in the same informed way and associative view. He quickly ascertained that there were co-operators in Cambridge, and offered to supply them with a copy of the *Life of Robert Owen* on receipt of sixpence in stamps. And before they had been going a year the committee instructed the purchase of the biography. At one meeting the secretary produced the *Life of Robert Owen*. He was ordered to take due care of the little book and, evidently to satisfy themselves that the educational work was being well cared for, he was further requested to see that it was produced at each meeting. On the same occasion the treasurer asked to borrow the volume, promising to return it the following week. So began the educational work of the Cambridge Society.

As long ago as 1870 the custom of organising an annual tea party and festive evening was established. The second year they did so well as to make a profit of 10s. 5d., which

the committee wisely decided to keep in reserve for the use of any future anniversary—a sensible precaution in view of the business uncertainty of such evenings of pleasure. In 1872 a correspondence in the local papers arose. As usual it did good, and furnished useful matter for reference at the tea party that year. Professor Henry Fawcett sent an encouraging letter to the co-operators; but beyond such verbal expressions of goodwill there seems to have been little association between the store and the university. In 1877 G. J. Holyoake attended the annual festival as a representative of the Co-operative Union, and during the next few years the Society got into fraternal touch with the activities of the movement. In 1880 a wonderful impetus was given by a District Conference at which Tom Hughes and Hodgson Pratt presented the co-operative faith with that touch of idealism they both presented and practised. On the same day they addressed a meeting of university men under the presidency of Professor James Stuart. The tea was so successful from the financial point of view that a profit of £6 resulted. This became the nucleus of the Tea Party Fund, which was formed to enable the committee to fix the price of subsequent tea tickets as low as possible; evidently the committee, then as now, regarded with co-operative horror the thought of profiteering in any shape or way.

A MISSIONARY EFFORT.

The inspiration given by Tom Hughes and Hodgson Pratt and the encouragement resulting from the profitable tea party had their effect on the outlook of the committee. They had been inclined to stay at home, to regard the Society as a local affair and to keep very much to themselves. True, Mr. J. H. Cooke had represented the Society at the opening of the London branch of the C.W.S. in 1879, but they had little heeded either co-operative societies in their own area or the individual people in and around the town who might have been persuaded to join. In the early eighties the policy of comparative isolation was abandoned, and it was decided to hold a propaganda

meeting at Trumpington—one of the suburbs of the town that seemed a long way from the centre of co-operation in Cambridge. The Rev. E. B. Birks, the vicar, gave the use of the schoolroom, and it was decided to hold a tea followed by a meeting to explain the purpose of co-operation; those who did not take tickets for tea were admitted to the meeting on payment of a penny. The parish constable was to be presented with a free ticket for the tea—the intention apparently being to secure his attendance, and thus give the affair an official status. From every viewpoint the missionary enterprise was successful; at the following committee meeting there sought admittance to membership from Trumpington the police constable who had been generously regaled with tea, a laundress, a gardener, a groom, a labourer, a miller, and a railway servant. This census of occupations is an interesting sidelight on the class of people who were being attracted by the new order of shopkeeping.

Having ventured thus far into the highways and byways to seek converts, the Cambridge people next sought more knowledge. They appealed to the other societies round about to join with the Cambridge Society in sending a delegate to the congress at Leeds; they suggested social pleasure in an excursion to Hunstanton, and they decided to supply all local reading rooms with copies of the *Co-operative News* weekly. The managers of some of these accepted the offer gladly; others preferred to remain in ignorance of the social force that was growing in their midst. Steadily the educational zeal was leavening the lump. After making a grant towards the expenses of the Oxford Congress in 1881, the Society decided to form an educational committee, Messrs. Birnie, Mason, Cranfield, and the Secretary to form the first committee. Their main care seems to have been to give a practical turn to the monthly meetings of the members, and so well did they succeed in it that by the end of 1883 these periodical gatherings supplemented their criticisms of the committee with discussions on the problems of branch stores, the necessity of a treasurer, bonus to labour, and similar

topics of internal importance to the Society. A proposal to devote $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the profits to educational purposes was vetoed in January, 1884, but in April of the same year the fund was constituted on a $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. basis, and the committee re-constituted with Messrs. Parnell, Cranfield, Brierley, Lyon, and Beaumont. Mr. Parnell made efforts to bring about a closer association between the University men and the co-operators, but knowledge was not greatly in demand by the latter, and housekeeping worries did not demonstrate the value of co-operation to the former. There was a discussion on trade unionism and co-operation at the Union Society, and at one meeting it was reported that members of the University were willing to give lectures to the co-operators. But the co-operators of thirty years ago did not want to be lectured, and the nearest they got to the colleges was in 1888, when a deputation went to the Bursars of St. John's College proposing to rent a farm for culture of another kind. In the following year Mr. G. R. Meaden, the present president of the Society, was elected to the educational committee—that being his first official association, an association that continues to the considerable advantage of the prestige of the Society as a local institution.

Latterly the educational work has proceeded on varied lines. At one time shorthand and book-keeping classes were organised, a band provided harmony for some seasons, and village fetes and children's gatherings have been a feature of real educational endeavour. Classes in co-operation and a close union with the activities of the Workers' Educational Association have been another of the widening aspects of co-operative education in Cambridge.



CHAPTER VII.

THE YEARS OF WAR

Others, I doubt not, if not we,
The issue of our toil shall see ;
Young children gather as their own
The harvest that the dead have sown,
The dead—forgotten and unknown.

Whittier.

WHEN the war came the Society was strongly entrenched in the good opinion of the people of Cambridge. They recognised how it had, for nearly fifty years, sought to protect them against those who sought to add to the cost of living. It had enabled the small wages of the workers to be utilised to the best advantage; and when those who had held aloof from membership saw the cost of living soaring well above their weekly resources in the early weeks of the war they hastened to join. Within a few months the membership rose to 6,805; and the sales for the half year ending December 31st, 1914, were £63,003. Taking advantage of the new rules which had been adopted altering the name of the Society to the Cambridge and District Co-operative Society Limited (and eliminating that restricting membership to residents within a fifteen miles radius), its influence has been extending far afield into the orchards and smallholdings bordering on the flat fenlands. "We have," proudly reported the Committee, "by adopting the policy of keeping prices down to as low a level as possible under circumstances, done much to convince all classes of the population, not only of the benefit of co-operation, but also the futility of continuing to leave the sources of supply and the distribution of goods in the hands of those whose interest is to make profit and who were too often prepared to adopt any means to achieve their aim." Quickly adapting itself to the new conditions occasioned by the war the Society was one of the first local employers to add a war bonus to the wages of its employees to help

them to meet the increased cost of living. The hours of closing the shops were adjusted for the better organisation of the new staffs that had to be formed owing to so many of the men being taken in the army. By closing the shops during meal-times it became possible to conduct the business with little inconvenience to customers. The output from the bakery increased on civilian account; while there sprung up a demand from the military for supplying the troops—a demand the fulfilment of which by the co-operative society was appreciated by the men who enjoyed the bread, the best bread in the district, as housewives would say. In all the shops girl and women workers were introduced to take the place of the men transferred to the army and, so efficient was the shop organisation that had been developed, they were quickly trained to serve the public well.

CO-OPERATIVE CONCENTRATION.

Meanwhile the committee and the chief officials watched the trend of events, and played their part in the stress of the time. They made their contribution to the national co-operative capital, concentrating their investments for the State through the C.W.S. They made additions to the bakery; they took over the society at Willingham which had been in difficulties, and they kept watch over those who sought to place the co-operative movement at a legislative disadvantage, protesting against the agitation for the taxation of co-operative savings—an agitation which had come along in growing volume as the movement perfected its machinery for meeting the forces against it.

With a confident spirit the committee urged the members forward. In 1917 interest on share capital was advanced from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 per cent., and in the first half of that year 394 new members were admitted. The co-operators numbered 7,688; probably representing between 30,000 and 35,000 persons. The Society progressed financially and commercially; it grew co-operatively. Its missionary zeal quickened; it went out further into the highways and

byways; it knit its people closer, and it intensified the co-operative spirit by deciding to give up the little deviation of giving credit which had crept in at some stage or other of its progress. Accordingly on January 1st, 1918, a system of cash trading was adopted; ready money business was made the rule—and the Society grew bolder and braver and greater than ever.

By the middle of 1917 only two employees of military age who were with the Society before the war remained at their posts—all the others had linked with the national forces, and they were not forgotten by the Society which they had served. Delivery difficulties accumulated like leaves in autumn. Promptly bread shops were opened—four were fitted up in the first quarter of 1918—so that members could take their daily bread, with resultant economy to themselves, for in a co-operative society the Pauline philosophy that we are “all members one of another” prevails. During all the disadvantages of the datum period and the ration régime the Society went forward, the members responding appreciatively to all the calls of the committee. The Bishop’s Stortford Society, which had had a variegated career, was finding existence a great struggle, and appealed to the Cambridge Society for help. The members were co-operatively sympathetic, and the amalgamation of the Society with that of Cambridge followed. That was in the Autumn of 1918. Within a year the fortunes of co-operation in the ancient town were completely rehabilitated, and the store will soon be among the largest branches contributing to the aggregate trade of the Society.

Thus the Cambridge and District Co-operative Society pursued its way through the years of war, closing the last twelvemonth with a record membership of 8,403. The trade was well above £200,000—nearly twice as great as in the year 1914. Share capital rose to £86,837; and £13,422 was returned to members as discount on their purchases, the dividend being 1s. 4d., a reduction of only 3½d. as compared with the average rate of return the year before the war.

In addition to assisting the members to secure the necessaries of life in as full quantities as permissible, and at as low a price as possible, the Society also considered the claims of the employees to a shorter working day, and established a 48-hour week, again proving themselves pioneers in the establishing of good conditions for those associated with them. Moreover, the Society adopted the principle of Collective Life Assurance, giving all in membership the benefits resulting from the associated endeavour in trading.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT.



SOCIETY'S REGISTERED OFFICE,
73, Burleigh Street, Cambridge.

The Office is in close proximity to the main buildings of the Central Premises, Burleigh Street. This property, which includes two shops adjoining, was purchased in the early days of the war in view of future possible developments. When the time is ripe, some re-arrangement of the Central Departments will be necessary, and the Office will possibly then find a new home.

WHILST the Society has fully developed in the town it has been watchful of the interests of the dwellers in the villages and rural districts round about. Within a few miles of Cambridge are many colonies of smallholders, as well as workers in the orchards and fruit gardens that flourish exceedingly in East Anglia.

Histon is the centre of an important fruit-preserving industry, and the co-operative branch facing the village

common has no more loyal supporters than the people of that part of the district. Cottenham and Old Chesterton are two other branches that have attracted those who cultivate the soil. Old Chesterton is surrounded by smallholders—men who toil in sun and storm to provide the townspeople with supplies of fruit, vegetables, and meat, for they are great pig rearers and poultry keepers, a fact recognised by the co-operators of Cambridge, who, when they set a shop in their midst, made arrangements to supply feeding stuffs to all the requirements of such a rural area. Consequently the smallholders of Chesterton have seen more than one facet of the co-operative diamond; they have realised the economy of filling their tables and their homes from the local co-operative store to the extent of about £9,000 a year. In return they offer their produce, through the Society, to the townsfolk—a system of mutual exchange that has been developed to the benefit of producer and consumer alike.

Willingham is another district in which the Cambridge co-operators have made distinctive progress. For many years a separate society existed in the village, but its isolated position militated against substantial progress. Since the Cambridge Society took it over it has become a very successful branch, not only in the volume of trade but also in the atmosphere it has created in the district. Willingham is full of smallholders, most of whom previously disposed of their produce to market salesmen and speculators, or else were dependent upon the chance sales in the London market with all the expense of market dues, railway transport, &c. Often they would send their produce to the market and receive very little cash in return. Sometimes the small prices realised would hardly allow for anything but a debit note to the cultivator. Now, however, that is changed, and those smallholders who are members of the Cambridge Society are able to arrange for their fellow members as a collective body to have their tomatoes and flowers, and sell them in the town or in some of the other branches. Thus all the delay and expense of marketing is saved.

Periodically the officials of the Society send the motor lorry out into the villages loaded with stocks for the stores. It then drives round to the various small cultivators, receives their produce, and conveys it into Cambridge with an economy and celerity that gives the townsmen an opportunity of freshly ripened fruit and produce at the lowest rates. During recent seasons the Society has been able to determine the selling price of many seasonable foods in a way that has benefited the consumer and materially aided the producer.

The policy of bringing town and country into close co-operation is one that has led to the great developments of recent years, and if wisely and widely directed will make the co-operative organisation the great security for the prosperity of the villages round about.

Not only in the rural areas, but also in the residential parts like Newnham, co-operation is progressing, it being recognised that the Society is no one class organisation but exists for the benefit of the whole of the people.

There is no finality in social welfare and developments at Cambridge in the fulfilment of co-operative adventure may quicken, as has the pace of people during the last century. In 1828 Gladstone left the coaching inn in Holborn to go from London to Cambridge by road. He started from the Capital at ten o'clock in the morning and reached the University town by 5 p.m. Kingsley went by road—on foot—when he was an undergraduate at Magdalen College, Cambridge, in 1842, and thus spent the day; now the modern man journeys by train in an hour and a half. Such has been the accelerated pace of travel, and of the multitude.

Working folk—a term expressive of all who have to earn their own livelihood—have travelled far and fast along lines of social advancement—mainly in Co-operation. They find their industrial salvation by way of mutual help—Association which, as Mazzini declared, is the word of the epoch. Associating first for the supply of the daily neces-

sities of the table they have tackled the furnishing of their homes. But the men of the town have enlarged their outlook. For many years the co-operators of Cambridge circumscribed themselves in a 15-mile radius; now they have no limitations. They have gone beyond the borders of the town into the rich fenlands, the prospering orchards and the plots of small cultivation that are giving the people a place on the land of their birth. Co-operation is entering every hamlet in the county of Cam.; it is permeating the University as well as the town; it is giving new hope to the rural as well as the urban community. And the Cambridge co-operators welcome all their neighbours to join their efforts to make co-operation the potent force and the principle of real citizenship in the town and country.

PRESIDENTIAL ROLL OF HONOUR

The following is a list of Presidents from the inception of the Society to December, 1919.

Years of Service			Name
From	To		
1868	.. 1869	.....	J. Bracher.
1869	.. 1871	.....	T. H. Prime.
1871	.. 1873	.....	Wm. Drake.
1873	.. 1875	.....	J. H. Cooke.
1875	.. 1876	.....	C. Flatters.
1876	.. 1878	.....	James Birnie.
1878	.. 1879	.....	Joseph Stanford.
1879	.. 1880	(6 months)	James Beaumont.
1880	.. 1882	.....	James Birnie.
1882	.. 1883	(6 months)	J. H. Cooke.
1883	.. 1885	.....	C. Flatters.
1885	.. 1886	.....	John Black.
1886	.. 1889	.....	C. Flatters.
1889	.. 1899	.....	G. R. Meaden.
1899	.. 1909	.....	D. Crown.
1909	.. 1912	.....	G. R. Meaden.
1912	.. 1914	.....	W. J. Prior.
1914	.. 1919	.....	G. R. Meaden.

